Why the Japanese Soldiers Are Found Fighting to the Death

ON THE WAY TO THE TEMPLE THRONGS ARE MERRY.

A MARVELOUS thing is occurring in Japan today. All slain soldiers' souls are being enshrined within the sacred precincts of the Yasu-kuni-jinji, the "Country-Protecting-Temple," in the nation's capital and the people are rejoicing in holiday throngs. No wonder the little Japanese soldiers fight to death. If there is a mind not Eastern which does not pause in uncomprehending wonderment before this remarkable fact, then that mind must be a composite of many lives which are not lived in a simple and unreverential belief in the Eternal Now; lives which understood and paid deep homage to the great Has Been and the greater Is-to-Be. It is quite beyond me, I am most unwilling to admit, for my inheritance is the narrow-est and I am of the Occident and its most ungrateful impermanence. The general attitude of the foreigner in Japan toward this manifestation of a living belief in souls which die not nor ever leave their earth haunts, seems to be one of half-amused toleration such as we are prone to display toward the vagaries of an imaginative child, but this is only an unconscious expression of complete misapprehension which probably will voice itself in many printed interrogations anent Japanese simplicity and benightedness in the near future.

Concerning Thought.

I myself am not so sure that this people of strange contradictions is not right in its attitude of reverence toward the great Present-producing-Past, and I have tried most earnestly to force my mind to even a shadowy comprehension of its strange principles, but, to follow their way of reasoning, I may be the originator of this impulse in my multiplied self and not until my next incarnation, or at my returning after that, will it free itself from formlessness and become existent as a defin e thought and belief. Will I then be born an Oriental? It must be so, for that environment can overcome heredity is a fact, proven by many conspicuous exceptions, around which the scientific doctrines of psychology have played hopelessly since the word evolution found a meaning. I must be born an Oriental or the Oriental faith in the everlasting earth-power of individual souls must supplant in the western world the accepted belief in an end of human existence after three score years and ten. "Accepted belief" makes me pause to wonder. One writes it mechanically. It is merely a phrase, but in this connection it is full of meaning. The Japanese religion is not an accepted belief. It is an inherent belief which has belonged to no other people and which contains for them a story of Genesis without recognizing a necessity for a theory of conclusion.

Lafcadio Hearn's Soul Search.

A great Occidental died the other day in Tokio, a convert to a religious faith, or combination of faiths, in which were included the principles of Shintoism. Lafcadio Hearn was an Irish-Greek I believe, but he lived his life in the mystic overworld of Eastern philosophy; he abandoned Occidentalism altogether and left to mourn him a Japanese wife and family. But I have wondered if he did not force his evolution in a measure, if such a thing can be done, and if he is not now a stranger in a strange soul-world seeking vainly for his own. Does the influence of environment reach even into the Afterward? Will the soul of Lafcadio Hearn find that the souls of the little brown people of his adoption vibrate in rhythm with his own, or will he yearn upward and away from earth life toward that serene spirituality, free from the trammels of the flesh, which is the goal of all Christian desire? Lafcadio Hearn has declared himself a believer in ancestor worship, which is a simple rendering, for alien understanding, of the first principle of Shintoism. He speaks of "an intimate sense of relation between the visible and the invisible worlds which is the special religious characteristic of Japan among all civilized countries," and from this he adduces much strange fact concerning the posthumous honors which are constantly being conferred upon men of Japan who died without reaping the rewards of patriotic devotion. There is a general idea among foreigners that these posthumous honors are intended only as memorial ceremonies and to benefit the families of the dead, but this is by no means true. "To Japanese thought," says Lafcadio Hearn, "the dead are not less real than the living. They take part in the daily life of the people, sharing the humblest sorrows and the humblest joys. They attend the family repasts, watch over the well being of the household, assist and rejoice in the prosperity of their descendants. They are present at the public pageants, at all the sacred festivals of Shinto, at the military games and at the entertainments especially provided for them, and they are universally thought of as finding pleasure in the offering made to them or the honors conferred upon them."

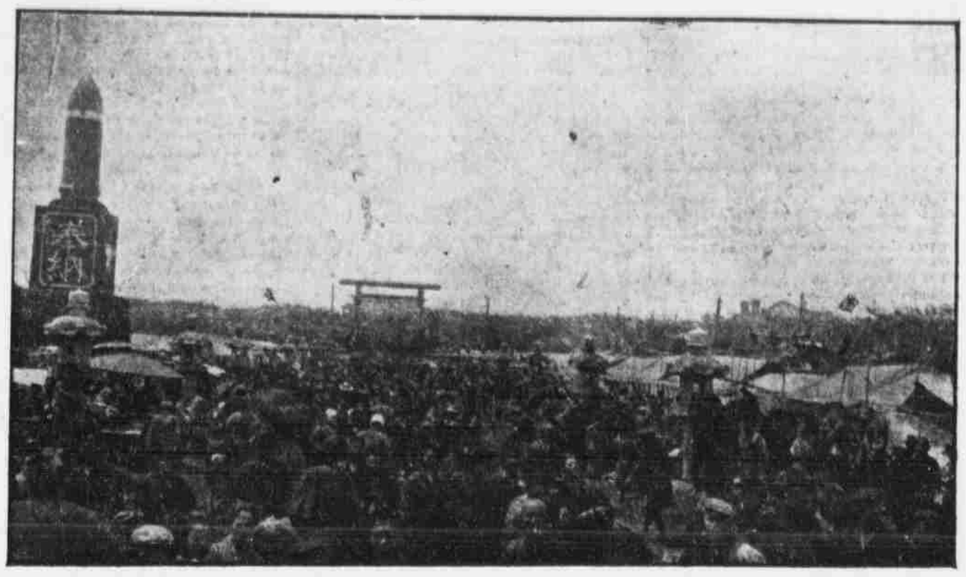
Feast of the Lanterns.

There is an annual festival in Japan called the Bon Matsuri, which is a time for communion with all souls, and at this season, which is in midsummer, the departed spirits are supposed to return to their accustomed haunts and to inhabit for a time the little household shrines, one of which is a part of every Japanese home, however humble it may be. This festival is called by foreigners the "feast of lanterns," because this is what it looks to be, and many are the enthusiastic descriptions of it which have been written by travelers fortunate enough to have been in the country in mid-July. The curious ancient cemeteries are hung full of lanterns and great fires are lighted everywhere. At the door of every dwelling a huge white lantern is hung that the wandering spirit may not go astray, and before the ihai, or sacred tablets of the dead in the family shrines, offerings of food are made and many prayers on tiny slips of paper. In many places in the interior, where old customs have not given way to new ideas, a strange, fantastic ceremony is performed which has been handed down to the people from time immemorial. It is called the Bon-odori and is a weird dance done by priestesses of the faith in the court of a Shinto temple in the middle of the last night of the three days' festival. For lack of space I may not describe it here, but that it is an invocation and an adoration as sincere as religious belief can be, one must believe, as one believes, by its very weirdness, that it is as old as the ancient faith it so fantastically celebrates.

The Japanese display a strange taciturnity in conversing with foreigners about these things and no influence was quite strong enough to gain for one of us admittance to the "Counntry-Protecting-Temple" during the ceremonies of yesterday and today in honor of the 100,000 or more soldiers of the empire whose names and deeds have been recorded here to their everlasting glory. This temple is one of many of its kind in Japan it seems, and its services are exclusively in honor of the nation's soldiery, which has so successfully maintained through the years and the ages the national independence. My mind was alert with curiosity and interest when I was told about this great event, but I could get no satisfaction from any Japanese friend. I was simply told that no mere spectators would be admitted to the temple and that there was really nothing for me to be particularly interested in any way. But finally my inquiries met with a ray of response from Mr. H. Satoh, a Japanese gentleman of such attainments as have won for him large reputation as a scholar, and he wrote for me an explanation of the ceremony, with what fullness I will leave the reader to judge.

What the Ceremony Means.

"That the soul exists after its corporal life is universally believed in Japan since time immemorial," says he. "Founded on this belief is the reverential homage every Japanese pays to his ancestors and to all who have departed from this world. To perpetuate the memories of those who have ceased to live in this world is a duty expected of the kinsmen of the dead. Those who have done deeds in this life which are worthy of a public recognition are remembered in a way best calculated to perpetuate their memories among a wider circle of people than their kinsmen and in this instance the commemoration of the dead and of their doings takes the form of having a shrine or temple built in a public place where people go to pay homage to them or to get inspiration for a life like that which the enshrined spirit has led while in this world. Generally there is a periodical occasion fixed for paying homage to the spirit and such an occasion, which is usually an anniversary of the death, is called a 'matsuri,' or festival. Since the Meijiera, when the emperor began to assume actual rule over the empire and the new system of the army and the navy was established, a more concentrated form of preserving the memories of those who have fallen in battles for the imperial cause came to be organized and the Shokonsha is the fruit thereof. Literally it means the temple or shrine where the spirits are invited or asked to come. The central shrine for such a purpose is located in Tokio, with branches in all places where there are garrisons. The central temple in Tokio, which is known under the special name of Yasu-kuni-jinji, or "Country Protecting-Temple," is supported out of the imperial household funds and also by the War office.



CROWDS OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE DURING THE FEAST.

Emperor Pays Special Homage.

"The fundamental idea underlying the establishment of the temple is to perpetuate the memories of those who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of the country and their spirits are invoked in a place especially set aside for the purpose and regularly, once in a year, a festival is held in honor of the dead. Their spirits are asked to be present on that occasion, to receive the homage of their compatriots who cherish the memories of those whose records of deeds are carefully preserved in that temple. The festival this year lends special feature on account of the numerous additions to the records of the temple, in consequence of this war. The emperor usually sends a delegate, but on this occasion he will honor the temple with his personal presence. The empress and the crown prince and princess will also pay a visit to the shrine. The celebration will last for three days. This year it assumes especial importance on account of the emperor's condescension to honor the occasion with his presence. The kinsfolk of those who have died in this war receive special privileges of not only discounts on their journey to the capital, but also in the privilege of visiting the imperial gardens, which are generally closed to the ordinary public. The most prominent attraction is afforded by the newly captured regimental flag decorated with the order of St. George, and the flag of the Varing. Those two flags now form a part of the war collection of the imperial court, and are lent for the occasion by the imperial household. The relatives of the dead will receive a wooden cup as a souvenir. The emperor and the empress have been pleased to give 3,000 yen toward the expenses of the celebration, and the imperial sympathy so manifestly shown for the perpetuation of the memories of the noble dead is making a very strong impression upon the minds of the people and the love and respect the people of Japan entertain toward the reigning sovereign is all the more strengthened. Loyalty and patriotism will thus have a very powerful stimulus at this critical epoch of Japan's history."

What Panama Will Be When the Canal is Complete

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PANAMA, June 8.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—When the canal is completed Panama will probably become one of the great cities of the world. This is the opinion of Chief Engineer Wallace and other experts who understand the methods by which the interoceanic trade will be carried on. They say that Panama will probably be a free port and that steamers from all parts of the world will meet here to take on and put off goods. It will be cheaper to carry freight through the canal and over the seas on big vessels, and ships of 10,000 tons, 20,000 tons, and even larger, will load here for their long hauls across the Atlantic and the Pacific. There will be lines of smaller steamers traveling up and down the coasts of North and South America, acting for the great ships as the feeders do to a railroad. Vessels of 3,000 4,000 and 5,000 tons will come here from different parts of the Pacific and transfer their goods to the larger ships, taking in return other goods to carry back home.

The chief steamship lines will have a combination of large and small vessels, and I understand that such plans are already making. John Barret tells me that the manager of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, the great steamship company of Japan, which now has vessels from that country to all parts of Asia and to Europe, says his company will have six big steamers running from Japan to England through the Panama canal, and that it will add twenty-five small steamers to sail up and down the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of our hemisphere, gathering goods for the larger ships, to be transferred at Panama.

Two Mighty Ports.

It may be that Colon, at the Atlantic end of the canal, will also be made a free port, and if so Colon and Panama will grow as Bremen and Hamburg have grown through the free port facilities which have been offered there. Hamburg with its suburbs has already 1,000,000 people and Bremen as rapidly increasing in population and wealth. Hong Kong, the English free port off the coast of China, is another instance of how cities grow through such advantages, and the same may be said of Singapore, that other half-way station around the world lying between the Pacific and Indian oceans.

A comparison is often made of the Panama canal with that of Suez, and the prophecy added that the towns of Panama and Colon will be as dead as Port Said and Suez when the canal is done. The engineers say that the conditions here are far different from those of Suez, that Suez is a close neighbor to the great commercial centers of Europe and as such it offers no inducement to trade. They aver that Panama will be the halfway station on the long trip from one side of the Atlantic to the other side of the Pacific and that it is so situated that it cannot but be one of the great trading places of the nations, surpassing Singapore, Hong Kong or any similar station on the highways of commerce.

Panama will grow also through its enormous coal business, becoming one of the chief coaling stations of the world. The biggest fleet that sails the Pacific today is the coaling fleet. Vessels are always moving here and there across that vast system of waterways from Australia, Japan, Chile and even England to supply the different steamship companies with coal. When the canal is finished the greater part of the coal used in the Pacific will come from our southern ports. It is probable, so the chief engineer thinks, that it can be then taken to Panama and sold for $3 per ton, including the $1 per ton toll on the canal. The coal which we now get here from Australia brings $5 and $6 a ton, while our Virginia coal is selling for more than $7, largely owing to the freight charges of the Panama railroad, which have already been reduced under this new regime.

The New Panama.

But is there room at Panama for a large city? The town today is crowded together upon a little rocky peninsula shaped like a frying pan, which juts out into the sea, the handle of the pan connecting it to the mainland. The peninsula when the tide is in has the ocean washing the walls which surround it, but when the tide goes out a great expanse of dirty brown coral rock is to be seen, and this coral rock runs for several miles along the north shore above Panama to La Boca, at the Pacific mouth of the canal. It extends out from the land into the ocean along the line where the canal will be dredged to the deep waters of Panama bay.

As it is today there is no room whatever for city expansion, and it would be better if half of the city buildings were cut out for widening the streets. Mr. Wallace, however, has a plan to build a retaining wall about the edge of this great coral reef, taking in an area several times as large as the present Panama city and extending the wall along the edge of the canal to the wharves at La Boca. Inside this wall a part of the vast excavations which must be made at the Culebra cut could be dumped. There will be 100,000,000 cubic yards which must be disposed of, and this is about 100 times more than is necessary to fill such an area. Indeed, the disposal of the earth and rocks is one of the problems of the canal construction. Not more than 1,000,000 cubic yards can be put into the valleys of the immediate vicinity. The remainder must be carried far away or thrown into the Pacific. By this plan an excellent site can be made for the new city. The earth and rock of Culebra is perfectly clean and sanitary, and it would make an excellent foundation. The land when prepared could be divided up into wide boulevards, leaving plenty of places for parks and all modern city conveniences. Enough might be sold to pay the cost of remodeling the present city, taking out every alternate block and making the streets wide and healthful. I understand that the French had a similar plan, but that it has never been presented to the public.

PANAMA STREETS DUG UP FOR SEWER.

LEAN SIDEWALKS AND OVERHANGING BALCONIES.

Old Panama.

The Panama of today is one of the oldest towns of the hemisphere, being the successor of the original Panama, which was situated several miles beyond La Boca, in a rich rolling country, now the summer residence of many well-to-do Panamans. Old Panama was long the richest city of the new world. The vast treasures of the Incas were carried here to be shipped across to the Atlantic and thence to Spain. This was the half-way station to the Philippines, and the Spanish galleons loaded with silver and gold crossed the ocean to the isthmus. Early in the seventeenth century Panama was noted throughout the world for its wealth and splendor, and it was in 1671 that the English buccaneer, Sir Henry Morgan, landed at the mouth of the Chagres and crossed the isthmus. He besieged Panama and burned it to the ground, carrying away 175 horse and mule loads of silver, gold and other loot, and in addition 600 prisoners. At that time Panama contained eight monasteries, two churches and a hospital. It had 200 warehouses, 2,000 magnificent residences and 5,000 houses of more ordinary build. Morgan tortured the people to make them tell where their treasures were hidden, sparing not even the women.

He was no respecter of religions, and the churches and monasteries were looted and burned. Today there is nothing but ruins on that site of the once famous city, one old tower standing as a monument of the glories of its past.

Panama of Today.

The Panama of today was begun shortly after Morgan's butcheries. The people chose this rock, almost surrounded by the sea, for the site of a new town. They built a wall thirty feet high about its edges and constructed their houses inside that. A great part of this wall still stands. It is double in places, and on one side the city it forms a promenade, where the grown-ups walk of an evening, the children fly about on roller skates and play games, and where the canal employes go out for their daily airing.

In other places there was a moat between the two walls. This moat has grown up with trees, and in it reside many squatters. In some parts of the town houses have been built on top of the wall, and in others warehouses are to be found inside it, the two walls serving as parts of the building.

Panama itself looks like a fortification. Every house seems to have been put up to withstand the raids of pirates and revolutionists. The walls are often three feet thick and the doors are heavy and ironed, with little portholes through which the owner can peep out before opening the door. There are but few windows on the ground floor, and those which have been made are often covered with iron bars.

The houses are built close to the street. They are usually of one and two stories, and occasionally three. Along the second and third stories run iron balconies which shade the street below. These balconies are the evening sitting places of the family, and it is in them that the Panaman Juliet sits and receives the love glances of her Romeo, who stands on the street below. Romeo makes goo-goo eyes for weeks at Juliet before he dares open his mouth, and he never thinks of climbing up.

The well-to-do people of Panama live on the second and third floors. Very few of them have a house to themselves.

I know men worth $100,000 whose families live above cheap tenements or stores. One winds his way through dark and devious passages to get to their apartments, after which he finds himself in well furnished and comfortable quarters.

A City of Caves.

The ground floors of Panama make one think of a city of caves. This is especially so in the out-of-the-way parts of the town. The streets are narrow, with cobblestone roadways, and lean sidewalks made of flags about six or eight inches higher up. They wind this way and that, making one think of a walled canyon with rectangular holes in the sides. These holes are the doors, which are opened during the daytime, but at night so tightly closed that they seem to be hermetically sealed.

Looking in through the doors, one sees rooms ten or twelve feet square, with other rooms behind them. There are no windows facing the street and the door only gives the light. Often one room will be the home of a family, six or eight people sleeping in it and the elder ones working there in the daytime. Sometimes the room is a store during the day and a sleeping place at night. There are no sanitary improvements. The water comes from a cart or barrel on wheels, which is dragged through the streets, or from a well in a court near by. When the new water works are completed this will be bettered. Indeed, many of the streets are now dug up for the sewers and the water will soon be flowing from far up in the mountains into the Ancon reservoir, whence it will come into the city.

Among the Pawnbrokers.

Panama has several banks which do business in the large. The richest perhaps is that of the Ehrmans, the descendants of Henry Ehrman, who died here some years ago, worth about $1,000,000, and next to them, perhaps, the Brandons, who were bankers to the old Colombian government and who still do business with the Panama republic. In addition to this many of the merchants lend money and there are also pawnbrokers who give advancements on watches and other valuables at 5 per cent a month. The pawnbrokers have no balls over their doors as at home, and they are not such Shylocks as our dear uncles of Chatham street and the Bowery. I have been to many of these pawnbrokering shops, not to borrow, but to see if I could pick up something in old plate or jewelry as a souvenir of my trip. They have but few antiques of value, but now and then one finds a fine pearl or a gold chain with flat links of curious shape. Such chains were once made by the native jewelers and they are now in great demand among American ladies, who visit the isthmus. When Mrs. Taft was here she bought a splendid one for less than $55, and the wife of the chief engineer has another which would cause any American belle to break the tenth commandment. The larger of these chains are big enough to go around the neck and fall to the waist. They end in a cross of solid gold, which has, I doubt not, been blessed by the priest, as all Panama women are good Catholics. At one pawnshop I was shown a chain of woven gold, with a gold medallion as a pendant. The medallion had a score of fine pearls, the whole being topped by a pearl as big around as the end of the ordinary lead pencil. The price of this chain was $100 in silver. It would certainly be worth at least four times that in the United States.

Canal Versus Earthquakes.

One of the objections urged against the building of the Panama canal has been that an earthquake may occur which might ruin the work after it is completed. There is an evidence against this theory in one of the old churches of Panama. The chief engineer, Mr. Wallace, pointed it out to me the other day. It consists of what is probably the widest and lowest arch known to architecture. The arch must be fifty or sixty feet wide, and it is almost horizontal, consisting of one span without any support except at the two ends. It is part of a church built about 200 years ago and now in ruins. There are trees growing inside the church and grass and bushes have sprouted out of the windows high above the street. The church was planned by a monk architect, and the true believers say that he was able to construct this arch only by faith and prayer. He had planned his building and had put up the arch, only to find that it fell down again and again. At last in despair he spent a night fasting and praying to the Virgin. In his prayer he said he was doing his work for the glory of God, and he begged her to help him. He said that he would put up the arch once more, and that she should cause it to stand, even though the remainder of the church might crumble to pieces. He did build it, and it stood. The rest of the church was built over it; the roof was put on, and then a fire occurred which reduced the building to ruins. The arch, however, bolstered up by these prayers, remained erect, and so it is to this day. The chief engineer says that no such arch could withstand the severe shock of a great earthquake, and that its existence is an evidence that no earthquakes have occurred here within the past 200 years which could possibly affect such a construction as that planned for the Panama canal.

Panama, by the way, has many old churches and monasteries which are crumbling to pieces or have been burned to the ground. Within a stone's throw of the canal administration building lie the remains of what once was a great convent or monastery. They cover almost a city square, and I understand are for sale at a reasonable figure.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Public Makes Merry Holiday.

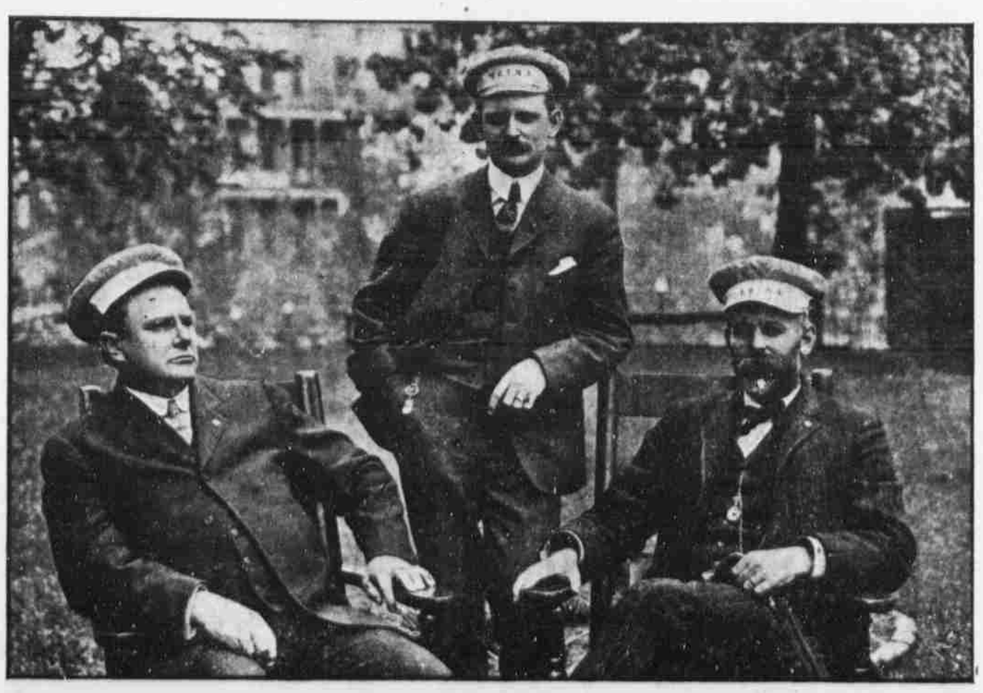
After acquiring this meager and unembellished information I went with my camera out to the great temple to see what might be seen and I was surprised to find that, far from being solemn and stately, as I had imagined it would be, the celebration was one of great festivity attended by all the small delights which go to make a holiday. Around the approach to the temple had sprung up a veritable Coney Island with all sorts of shows in full operation. Great overgrown wrestlers ran hither and yon with soft towels knotted about their long hair and light kimonos of the bathrobe order their only raiment. Vendors of sweet things contested right-of-way through the dense throng with purveyors of small toys and firecrackers. Each side of the avenue right up to the temple gateway was lined with small tents of every possible description, in which could be bought anything from a drink of sake to a small-sized cannon or in which could be seen any sort of show from a wrestling match or juggler's contest of agility to an exhibition of trained mice. The crowd was so great one could hardly make a way through it and it had been tramp-tramping through the gravelled avenue for so long that the place had become a perfect slough of mud and I was, for once, sorry that my footgear was not wooden, with little stilt attachments to keep me high and dry. Down at the far end near the temple gateway, was an interesting thing. Many old women were sitting about with huge wooden cages full of birds, common sparrows looking almost scared to death and fluttering most piteously against the bars of their little prisons. This was as it should be, for it attracted customers who crowded around to buy them and set them free toward the temple with prayers for soldiers' souls. It was a pretty thing to do and I longed to set a few of them free myself, but being a "queer foreign devil" I could not stop anywhere for an instant without attracting a crowd of gaping girls and women, which made me more or less unhappy. Photography for this reason was quite out of the question, because the instant I stopped and pointed my camera at something the crowd would close in around me as if I were some strange animal on exhibition and then they would push each other out of the way for a chance to get a "look see," and all the pleases and honorably condescends in the language failed to move them, even though spoken to the accompaniment of much wild gesticulation.

Living Soldiers and Priests.

Occasionally a company of soldiers would march up through the avenue, making an easy way for itself with a warning bugle and then one would remember the ceremony in progress behind the royal purple and imperial crested curtains before the portal of the shrine. The night before, I am told, all the priests of the faith in Tokio assembled here, when the world was long asleep, and, with all conceivable elaborations of Shinto service, invited the spirits of the slain soldiers to come and take up their earthly abode within the temple. Lights burned brilliantly all night and the weird chant of invitation filled all the silent spaces. It seems quite impossible, does it not, that such a thing could be in connection with a war of the twentieth century, and such a war as has added modernity to the most modern warfare? But it proves that Russia is fighting unseen hosts of warriors that are as real to the Japanese as the soldiers who go forth in blue to the sound of fife and drum to fight and live or fight and willingly join their comrades in the viewless multitude.

ELEANOR FRANKLIN.

Busy Men of the Black Hills



NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS OF THE BLACK HILLS TRAVELING MEN'S ASSOCIATION.—Photo, Copyright, 1905, by D. C. Cole.